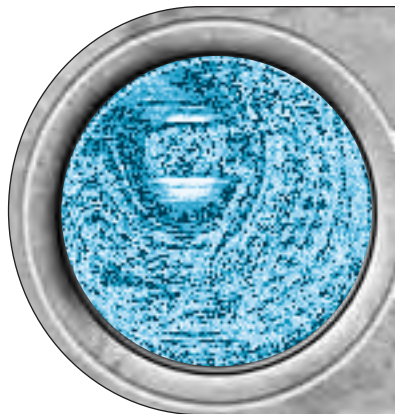




END-TIME: HOME AT LAST

The Case of the Absent Homeroom Teacher

February 12, 2011

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Genesis 3:15 (NIV) • “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

Acts 1:9-11 (NIV) • “After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ‘Men of Galilee,’ they said, ‘why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.’”

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 (NIV) • “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.”

Jude 14, 15 (NIV) • “Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: ‘See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands

of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.’”

Revelation 1:7 (NIV) • “Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.”

Revelation 21:3, 4 (NIV) • “And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’”

Isaiah 2:4 (KJV) • “And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

Revelation 21:25-27 (NIV) • “On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”

(See additional passages in student material.)

B. WHAT'S TO BE SAID ABOUT "HOME AT LAST"

The promise of the Second Coming of Christ infuses human existence with meaning, purpose, and closure, for it satisfies our longing for a world without sin, war, disease, and death. Our longing for Eden restored. Our craving to have departed loved ones restored to us. Our desire for face-to-face communion with our Creator.

While gospels, epistles, and Jesus Himself confidently predict His soon coming, they warn that world conditions preceding it will be laden with difficulties. For one thing, an ungodly society will pressure and tempt His followers to renounce their faith. Even religious figures will circulate dangerous errors about His coming and the end of the world. As a result, we are warned to live in constant expectation of His literal coming and not be entangled in worldly affairs or religious heresies.

Having irrevocably committed ourselves to the One who is the source of our faith, we will hail His coming with assurance, crying, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (**Isaiah 25:9, KJV**). At long last, sin's reign of terror and suffering will be over and that of love, joy, and peace forever instituted!

C. WHERE WE'RE GOING WITH "HOME AT LAST"

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Recognize that Jesus' second coming is near.
2. Understand that His coming is literal.
3. Prepare themselves and others for this climactic event.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) an adult church mem-

ber who, before becoming an Adventist, believed in the rapture, index cards on which questions are written; (Activity B) an adult church member who has always been a Seventh-day Adventist, believing in the literal, visible coming of Jesus; index cards on which questions are written.

Connecting • Bibles, student lessons.

Applying • Bibles.

2 BRIDGING

A. WHERE WE'VE BEEN BEFORE

Allow 10 minutes as students are arriving to:

1. Ask them which verse they chose to learn from Wednesday's portion of their lesson. Give them opportunity to say their verses from memory.
2. Give the students opportunity to "quote" themselves, using what they wrote in the Monday portion of their lesson. Be sure to debrief them about any quotations that might not reflect the Christian life accurately. However, quotations of this nature do not occur in every lesson.
3. Review responses that they and others made to the scenario that was posed on Sunday. Discuss the variety of responses, ending with thoughts from last week's What's to Be Said About . . . in the teacher lesson.

If you have a very large group, have adults available to process this section with smaller groups of students.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for *Adventist Mission for Youth and Adult* at www.realtimefaith.net)
- >> Service project reports

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word. At some point you should distribute or call their attention to their student lesson for this week.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Choose one or more “youth-friendly” adults who have formerly believed in the secret rapture. By candidly answering the students’ questions, these persons are to help them understand the nature and implications of the secret rapture.

Get set • Give the students index cards on which questions are written. (For example: What is the secret rapture, and when is it supposed to occur? What will happen to the people who are left behind? Why did you used to believe in the secret rapture? Why do you no longer believe in that view of end-time events?)

Go • Have selected students read the questions, allowing time for the guest to answer them one at a time. Thank the guest for coming, allowing the students to express their appreciation also.

Debriefing • Ask: What struck you most about the secret rapture as our guest talked about it? Did they give scriptural proof for it? Which of their former beliefs do they still hold today? How do they seem to feel about their current belief in the way Jesus will come?

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Select a “youth-friendly” adult who has always been a Seventh-day Adventist. Their

frank answers to the students’ questions will reinforce the biblical view of Jesus’ return.

Get set • Give the students index cards on which questions are written. (For example: How long have you been a Seventh-day Adventist? What is important about the name Seventh-day Adventist? According to the Bible, how will Jesus take His people away when He comes? How should we regard Christians who believe in the secret rapture?)

Go • Have selected students read the questions, allowing time for the guest to answer them one at a time. Thank the guest for coming, allowing the students to express their appreciation also.

Debriefing • Ask: What struck you most about the guest’s answers? What parts of Scripture are their views based on? How do they seem to feel about their beliefs? Why do you think many Christians misinterpret what the Bible says about Jesus’ coming? What is the benefit of believing all of what the Bible says about the Advent?

Present the following ideas in your own words:

All Christians are looking for Jesus’ coming, but believe that it will come in different ways. However, belief in the secret rapture may prepare an adherent for misinterpreting the Bible in other areas, like the view that those left behind have a second probation to accept Jesus. This belief tricks people into not taking advantage of their opportunity to accept Jesus now. Safety is always found in following God’s Word.

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

In your own words, tell the following story:

In *God’s Smuggler*, Brother Andrew recalls a remarkable experience from his youthful days in the late 1940’s fighting in the Dutch army against President Sukarno. A few weeks after buying a young gibbon (a small, tailless ape), which he kept as a pet in the barracks, he ob-

served that the animal's waist seemed to hurt. Embedded in a welt around the gibbon's middle, he found a wire, which someone had tied there when the pet was a baby. As the animal grew, the wire cut deeper into his flesh, causing him much pain. That night, Andrew shaved the hair from around the welt. With the gibbon patiently looking up at him, as if to say, "I understand," he cut gently into the flesh until he reached the wire, cut it, and threw it away. Immediately, the gibbon leaped up, somersaulted, and jumped onto Andy's shoulders, jerking his hair with delight. Afterward, the two became inseparable, each identifying with the other—the gibbon with Andy because of the removed wire, and Andy with the gibbon because the wire seemed similar to the guilt binding him and from which he himself longed to be delivered.—*Paraphrased from James S. Hewitt, Illustrations Unlimited (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1988), p. 68.*

Debriefing •Ask: How are the gibbon and our world today alike? (They are both sick. The gibbon was sick physically, and our world is sick spiritually, physically, mentally, and emotionally.) **How is the solution to their problems alike?** (The gibbon could not get rid of its problem by itself. It had to cooperate with Andrew, who got rid of the wire embedded deep within its flesh. Our world cannot get rid of its problems, for they are caused by sin, which is deeply embedded within our nature. However, when we cooperate with Jesus, He removes our sin and replaces it with righteousness and power. At His Advent, He will also cleanse the world of sin and recreate it.)

Present the following ideas in your own words:

Today we focus on an event that has been anticipated for almost six thousand years. Ever since Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, we have longed for the coming of the One who would bring sin and suffering to a close—Jesus. However, as eagerly as we have awaited His return, our feelings can't begin to compare with His own yearning to be with us and to make all things and us new.

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Present the following ideas in your own words:

In modern times, there have been several persons claiming to be Jesus. But they were discovered to have been false Christs because they did not do several things that the Bible said that Jesus would at His second coming. They did not come as Jesus said He would. They did not bring an end to sin. They did not raise the righteous dead and take them to heaven with the righteous living who awaited Jesus' return. Despite the growing confusion about the Second Coming, the Bible gives unmistakable facts about it.

Ask a volunteer to find and read **Genesis 3:15**. **Ask:** What does this passage, the first reference to Jesus' coming, say that He would do then? (destroy sin and its author, Satan) Have volunteers find and read the following verses (have them listen for the sights and sounds of Jesus' second coming): **Revelation 1:7; Jude 14, 15; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; and 2 Peter 3:10**. **Ask:** How do the sights and sounds we've noticed show us that Jesus' return will be literal and not a secret rapture? (Sight: Everyone on earth will see Him coming with His angels in the clouds; every dead Christian will be resurrected; Jesus will carry all living and resurrected Christians to heaven with Him. Sound: Jesus will shout and trumpet His joy at being reunited with His followers; all sinners will cry with fear and disappointment at His return; the heavens will pass away with a tremendous explosion, and the world will be destroyed.)

Say: Jesus' return will usher in heaven and the long-awaited period of peace and happiness.

Ask: But is heaven a state of mind rather than an actual place? Let's find and read about that in **Revelation 21:3, 4** and

Revelation 21:25-27. Ask: What do these verses say about it? (God the Father Himself will be there. Tenderly He will wipe all tears of disappointment, pain, and regret from our faces. Only righteous individuals will inhabit heaven; sinners will have no place there.)

Say: Jesus wants to come to earth even more than we want Him to come. Let's look for evidence of this in the Bible. Ask someone to find and read **2 Peter 3:9** and **Revelation 3:20**.

Ask: What do you think (or feel) about what these verses tell us?

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Ask someone beforehand to read or tell the story from Sabbath's portion of the lesson.

Ask: Does "The Case of the Absent Homeroom Teacher" remind you of any parable in the Bible? (the parable of the 10 virgins, the parable of the absent landlord, etc.) **How is it like these parables?** (Answers will vary: Jim's group is like the five foolish virgins, while Susan's is like the five wise virgins; Mrs. Williams represents the bridegroom, and the substitute teacher represents the person announcing the bridegroom's return. Mrs. Williams also represents the absent landlord who leaves his home for a while, and Jim and Susan represent the servants that he left in charge of things.)

Ask: What can we learn from this modern parable? (We should get ready and stay ready for Jesus' literal return, for it will be unexpected. We should be prepared enough to help those who are unprepared.)

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Pose the following scenario:

Scurrying with his six siblings toward the family van, 11-year-old Sam piled in for a trip to the local mall with his mother. Once there, Mom

gave everybody instructions on safety issues and a time to return to a designated meeting place. Then the four girls followed their mother, and the three boys went in another direction. Somehow Sam got engrossed in DVD's, surround sound stereo equipment, and demo tapes. When he looked up, his brothers were gone, and a clock announced that he had missed the meeting time by 15 minutes! His heart beating furiously, he hurried to the meeting place, only to find it empty.

Then a light went on in Sam's mind. He hurried to a pay phone and called his mom's cell phone. His brothers had been so engrossed in their new purchases that they had just assumed that he was in the van! His mom wasted no time in retrieving a relieved Sam and returning home with him.

Say: Sam's situation is like that of many persons just before the Second Coming. Just as Jesus predicted events that would announce His soon return, Sam's mother set a time for Sam and his siblings to leave the mall.

Say: Let's find and read **1 Peter 5:8** and **Jude 14, 15**. Have the verses read aloud. **Ask:** How is Sam's situation the same as (or different from) that of Christians at Jesus' second coming? (Sam got engrossed with other things, forgetting what his mother had said. Some Christians will not go with Jesus because they became involved in worldly matters and forgot what Jesus said. They will not have a second probation to get ready for Jesus' coming. Sam, on the other hand, got a second chance when his mother returned for him.)

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Separate the class into two groups. Group One is to describe brief scenarios in which someone is left behind and write each one on one side of an index card. (For example: some-

one's being left behind because they neglected to raise the required sum for an outing; missing a bus or airplane because someone overslept; missing a semester at school, a term at summer camp, etc., because someone turned in their application after the deadline; missing a big sale at a department store because one got the date confused, etc.)

As Group One finishes writing a brief scenario on a card, the leader quickly takes the card to Group Two. Their task is to relate the scenarios to their spiritual counterpart, missing out on Jesus' second coming, and write their comparison on the other side of the card. They should also include advice for avoiding "being left behind" when Jesus comes.

When Group Two has finished writing their responses on Group One's cards, read the cards one at a time, both sides, encouraging discussion.

Debriefing • Ask: How does missing out on any of the above situations compare to missing out on Jesus' coming? (not as disastrous) Why or why not? (Allow students to elaborate.)

Ask: If we were as serious about Jesus' Coming as we are about things we really like, would we be more prepared for Jesus' return? (Pause for phrase responses.) Why or why not? (Allow individual explanations.)

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. How do prayer, church-going, and Bible-reading relate to Jesus' return? How much of them do we have to do to get to heaven?
2. How much more do we love Jesus and heaven than we love people and things? Or do we?

3. How can we get this love if we do not have it? How can we nurture this love if we have it?
4. Which two signs would you identify to show that Jesus' return is near?
5. Why is Jesus coming a second time? Is it just to destroy sin and those still filled with it?
6. How important is Jesus' second coming to you? Is heaven worth our efforts to be there?
7. How can we best prepare ourselves and others for the Second Coming?

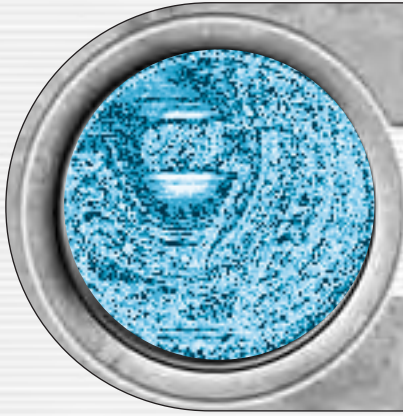
6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words conclude with the following ideas:

Ever since Adam and Eve first disobeyed, each of us has consciously or unconsciously longed for someone to make us whole and take us somewhere that is free from the results of sin. Jesus alone satisfies these persistent longings. Having experienced our human frailties firsthand for 33 years, He identifies with our yearning for wholeness. As our high priest, He accepts our faith in Him and makes us into new creations, for "the old has gone, [and] the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV). This faith relationship enables Him to deliver us from a world teetering on the brink of destruction at His second coming. At that time, He will take us and our resurrected loved ones to heaven, where we will never be separated from Him and where sin and its debilitating effects will never torment us again!

May that long awaited day come soon! Amen.



STUDENT LESSON

END-TIME: HOME AT LAST

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>>KEY TEXT: Choose one of the texts from Wednesday's portion of the lesson. Write it here and memorize it this week.



THE CASE OF THE ABSENT HOMEROOM TEACHER

(What connection do you think the following illustration has with the Bible texts on the other page?)

"Class," Mrs. Williams told her ninth-grade students with a twinkle in her eyes, "starting Monday, I'll be on maternity leave."

Everybody gasped. They had hoped she would be with them on the Fantasy Park trip.

"That's great!" Susan Wiltshire said, collecting herself. "If it's a girl, name her Susan!"

"No way!" Jim Usher joined in. "It's going to be a boy, and she's naming him after me."

"Well, as great as you all are," Mrs. Williams smiled, "the names are already chosen. If it's a boy, he'll be named after my husband, and if it's a girl, she'll be named after me." She hurried on to cushion the class's disappointment. "While I'm gone, though, I want Jim to make sure Team A finishes their science project, and Susan can

do the same with Team B."

"How long will you be gone?" Jim asked.

"A few weeks, but a substitute will be here to teach you. Since you've just about finished your projects, pass them in by nine o'clock May 14, a month from today."

"That's when we go to the amusement park!" Susan gasped. "If we don't finish our projects, we can't go!"

"Not to fear, Susan," Mrs. Williams replied. "You've got more than enough time to finish." Then, her eyes twinkling, she added, "And I'll work on being here for the ten o'clock Fantasy Park trip."

After Mrs. Williams went on leave, the groups worked hard on their projects. Then everybody gradually slacked off, figuring they'd finish everything later. However, Susan's group made its materials, while Jim's group waited for a department store sale to buy theirs.

Then one day the substitute teacher reminded them, "Today's May 14, and your projects are due!"

They all stopped cold in their tracks.

"Guys," Susan yelled, heading for the last of the materials. "Let's finish everything now!"

"Hey," Jim bellowed, "we need materials . . . Quick, Susan, lend us some of yours."

"Sorry, Jim. We don't have enough for our group and yours. Hurry to the store!"

Jim's group left in a cloud of dust. While they were gone, Susan's group finished their project, and Mrs. Williams came and took the jubilant Team B to Fantasy Park.



Sunday

HERE'S WHAT I THINK

Lately, Sandra's been going to church for more than meeting her friends, hearing the latest scoop, and planning after-Sabbath activities. She has a growing urge to know Jesus better. Once when the pastor preached on Jesus' second coming, she felt that something—or Someone—was nudging her to accept Jesus publicly. But she knows that if she acts on these convictions, her group will label her "Holy Jane." On the other hand, she wants to get ready for Jesus' return.

What should Sandra do? Is it possible to have it both ways? What will probably be the result either way she goes?

Log on to www.guidemagazine.org/rtf to post your responses. Be up-front and honest. Say what you think.



Monday

WHAT ARE THEY TRYING TO SAY?

Different people, different opinions. Some of the quotations below represent the views of true kingdom citizens; others may not. Can you tell the difference? How do these statements compare with what God is saying in His Word? After reviewing the texts in the God Says . . . portion of the lesson, write a statement that captures your belief. Be prepared to quote yourself at Sabbath School.

>>"God never made a promise that was too good to be true."—Dwight L. Moody, 19th-century U.S. evangelist.

>>"Can you tell a plain man the road to heaven? Certainly, turn at once to the right, then go straight forward."—William Wilberforce, 18th-19th-century English philanthropist.

>>"Heaven will be inherited by every man who has heaven in his soul."—Henry Ward Beecher, 19th-century U.S. minister.

>>"The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love."—Ellen White, 19th-century inspired author and church co-founder.

>>"According to *Left Behind*, the return of Jesus actually takes place in two distinct phases. First, Jesus returns silently and secretly, unnoticed by the world. At that moment Christians will be 'caught up,' or raptured, which is interpreted as the sudden vanishing of millions of people all over the globe. The rest of mankind, having been left behind, are then ushered into a 'seven-year period called the Tribulation.'"—Steve Wohlberg, current U.S. minister.

Write your own quotation.

WHAT I SAY IS . . .



Tuesday

SO WHAT?

Look around you. Everything in this world is in a mess, and doesn't seem to be getting any better. Wars overturn governments, destroy buildings, and split up families. Everywhere there is death and there is loss. Mysterious diseases strike, threatening whole groups of humans, as well as animals. Natural disasters are on the rise, and crime keeps inventing new ways to inflict pain and terror.

These events all shout that something BIG is about to happen. Just like a person dying from cancer or AIDS, our hopelessly sick world announces that it cannot last much longer. Life

has strayed so far from what God intended it to be that God must surely send His Son to destroy sin and restore earth to the wonderful, perfect place He created it to be.

But true to His nature of love, God has extended the time for us to get ready for Jesus' return. The awful things we see around us He uses to warn us. But the time for making the choice to let Him get us out of this mess is almost over. Very soon He has to come and put an end to sin and rescue those of us who have chosen to let Him fix us up and get us out of here.

Why on earth would a wise person want to waste this last bit of time, when making the decision to follow Jesus out of all this will guarantee a forever life of peace, joy, and adventure?



Wednesday
GOD SAYS . . .

>>Matthew 1:21 (NIV)

"She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

>>John 14:1-3 (NIV)

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."

>>1 Peter 5:8 (NIV)

"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."

>>Matthew 24:24 (NIV)

"For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible."

>>Matthew 24:27 (NIV)

"For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man."

>>Luke 12:32 (KJV)

"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

>>Isaiah 11:6-9 (KJV)

"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. . . . They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

>>Isaiah 65:22 (NIV)

"No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands."

>>(More: Luke 21:25-28; Hebrews 12:1, 2; Titus 2:13.)



Thursday
**WHAT DOES THIS
HAVE TO DO WITH ME?**

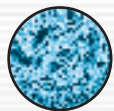
The Second Coming is going to be the greatest event in history. It represents the victory of God's way over Satan's way. Accompanied by millions of rejoicing angels, Jesus comes to earth with a trumpet blast that wakes the dead. Like a champion who has defeated a powerful enemy, He shouts His joy about bringing sin and suffering to an end.

Before your birth, He formed you, preparing your pathway for life. After birth, He stuck by you in good times and in bad. Despite your sins, He loved you as though you were the only person on earth. Now as He enters earth's atmosphere, He looks for you. He's eager to hug you, to take you away from every remembrance of sin and death forever, and, at long last, to introduce you to His Father.

Would you disappoint Someone who loves

you that much? Who did so much for you? Who values you so highly? Pleasure, money, and popularity can never compare with Him! They can never match the wonder of living with Him in a perfect world that daily increases your joy, peace, and love! Please make up your mind to accept this wonderful bargain today.

You'll never regret it!



Friday

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Think of all the things that you really love. Often what we value is determined not only by what we say about something but also by what we think of it and do about it. What, for instance, is it you think of most? What is it you spend a lot of time doing—or wishing that you could do? What is it that you could talk about for a long time—and not feel time pass? In short, what is it that really has your affections? Write a paragraph identifying these things.

After writing, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Can the things that I love compare with Jesus or match what He has in store for me in heaven?
2. Is what I love helping or hindering my preparation for Jesus' second coming?
3. If they are helping my preparation, how can I share them with others?
4. If they are hindering my preparation, are they worth my time and affection?

Write another paragraph recording your answers to the questions.

End the activity by asking God to reveal Himself to you as your best Friend. Ask Him to help you to continue loving the things that help you and others get ready for His return, and pray for strength to stop doing anything that hinders your relationship with Him or readiness for His coming.

